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SUBJECT: CONSULTATION ON PA BID FOR WTO OBSERVER STATUS

Reftels: (a) Jerusalem 1607 (B) Secstate 99831 (c) Geneva00783  
(d) Tel Aviv 02166 (e) Geneva 00839

1.(SBU) SUMMARY - This morning's consultation on the PA bid for observer status in the WTO General Council (GC) went well. No one questioned GC Chair Matus's intention not to place this issue of the agenda for the October General Council meeting and the discussion was short and low key. It appears that we will not have problems at the October GC meeting, although it is still possible that Egypt, or someone else from the region, could raise the issue under other business to make a plea for prompt and positive consideration. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Matus opened the discussion by recalling that he had received the PA's request on Monday. He had consulted with a number of countries so far but most did not have formal instructions from capital. While the PA was hoping for action at the October GC, Matus said there simply is not enough time for the necessary consultations before the agenda closes. At this stage he plans to continue consulting. He noted that it is traditional for the Chair to place issues such as this on the GC agenda if he believes the issue is ready for conclusion. If he finds a consensus in sufficient time, he said he would place this issue on the November GC agenda. He said that when he consults with Members he is hoping for concrete responses stating either yes, or no with an explanation of why the Member concerned does not see the PA as meeting the necessary criteria.

13. (SBU) After an awkward silence, Egypt took the floor to say that they strongly support the PA's request and hope that all Members will do the same. They said that they have spoken to many delegations who all expressed support. They said that they, and the other Members of the Arab Group, will continue to talk to other dels, noting that PA observer status would be good for their development and the institution. (Note - while there were quite a number of Ambassadors at the meeting, Egypt was represented at a more junior level.)

14. (SBU) Qatar, with some stage queues from Egypt, spoke on behalf of the Arab Group. They said that the Arab Group supports Egypt. The Group does not want to make a political issue of this and they recalled that they had not objected when a member of the Israeli

delegation had been selected to Chair a WTO Committee. (Comment - actually they did object behind the scenes but were pushed back by the Chair of the Committee on Trade in Goods and the DG.) They said that acceptance of the PA's request was important to peace in their region.

¶15. (SBU) Matus noted that all appeared to be in agreement that we will not place this issue on the October GC meeting and said he would start consultations next week.

¶16. (SBU) We seem to be in good shape for the October GC meeting. It's possible that Egypt, or someone else, will raise this under Other Business to make a pitch for the PA request but this would not be likely to result in a confrontational discussion. However, time was on our side this time around. The November GC meeting is likely to present more of a challenge.

SHARK